1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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closely paralleling that of their Hindu neighbors. On the other hand, their social organization is relatively lacking in the cleavages of caste which are so prevalent all about them. Apart from the village, which is usually composed of a number of patrilineal kin-groups, territorial organization is weakly developed, and the tribe as a whole has never been politically unified so far as historical records indicate.

Even as a unique people the Santal merit special attention. Numbering today over three million, the region they occupy contains the richest deposits of iron, coal and other crucial industrial minerals in all of India. The chief source of their livelihood, at least since the nineteenth century, has been settled agriculture. Prior to the nineteenth century, hunting was also an important livelihood activity, but the great increase in the region's population and subsequent reduction of forest areas has made game extremely scarce; it is now difficult for the inhabitants even to obtain materials for fuel and building purposes. Though the chief source of food and cash is the annual rice crop, a few vegetables are also grown and some fruit trees maintained. Some villages are near enough to a river for fish to be readily obtained, while some villages stock their local ponds. Even prior to the introduction of modern industry in the region, the Santal had ceased to be economically independent. Although they once did some pottery making, weaving, and even iron smelting, they have come to rely almost exclusively on various local Hindu castes for these material products. Women from several low Hindu castes are used frequently as midwives. While almost no Santal are ritually served by Brahmin priests, itinerant Hindu holy men (*sadhu*) visit many Santal villages, consulting horoscopes and offering prayers for a fee or donation.

Most Santal are still agriculturists, but some have turned to

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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619 [175] have achieved. For the traditional Santal, membership in the tribe constitutes the widest bond of social identification. This is true even though as far back as historical records extend (to the early nineteenth century), the Santal have not been politically unified. Beneath the level of the somewhat nebulous tribe there are interpenetrating territorial and kinship organizations. [634] [192] Territorially, the largest formally organized unit is the *Pargana* (Hindi = a subdivision of a district), a loose confederation of approximately a dozen villages bound together to settle certain judicial questions. Its proceedings are conducted by a "Chief" [621] (*Parganath* in Bengali or *Desh-Pradhān* in Hindi). The village (*ato*) is the only other formally organized territorial unit and is often divided into sections (*tola* in Hindi). Village "Chiefs" [622] [792] [192] are known as *Mąñjhi* or *Pradhān* (Hindi = Headman); other village officials include an "Assistant Chief" or "Chiefs" (*Jog-mąñjhi*) and a "Village Priest" (*Naeke*).

614 [192] The widest separate kinship unit is the "Clan" (*Paris:* or *Jāti*,* Hindi = Caste). According to the Santal creation myth there should be twelve clans; in fact there appear to be only nine. Clan membership, like all inheritance, is determined patrilineally. Containing thousands of members, the clan is, of course, a fictitious kinship unit; apart from bearing a name and the presumption of some common rituals performed by its constituent local lineages, the clan has few "likenesses" to bind it together and does not exist as a corporate unit. The clan is, nonetheless, an exogamous social entity which serves as a reference point establishing kinship relations among all Santal. Santal unable to trace "actual" common relatives can establish their kin relationship via the clan; for example, a non-kin of the same sex and same clan might be regarded as a brother,

* *Jāti* is also used by the Santal to refer to the tribe as a unit.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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613 any, and then begins to prepare a meal. Within the local lin-
[574] eage these visits are frequent, especially during festivals.

Rice and money are borrowed—always without interest—
426 within the local lineage, though there are cases in which help
[871] is denied. Occasionally members may contribute funds so that
184 a young member may obtain an education; however, prior to
[797] this century education was extremely rare among the southern Santal, among whom missionary efforts were not nearly so intense as among the northern Santal.

613 Though an entire local lineage is not likely to reside in a
• 621 single village, the members inevitably live near one another. Typically, the founders of a village are members of a single
[423] local lineage. Members of this founding lineage thus tend to have more and superior land than later immigrants. In most
613 instances the chief offices of the village, i.e., "village headman"
622 and "village priest" belong to the founding lineage. The rule
792 of primogeniture obtains, though upon the death of any officer the villagers must accede in the choice of a new officer. To what degree the villagers may in fact determine who shall fill the position is not clear, though there are cases in which an older son of a deceased headman or priest was passed over in favor of a younger son on the basis of alleged incompetence. Although the village must give its assent in selecting leaders—and to the decisions of leaders as well, since there is nothing more than the consent of the governed to support such decisions—important control of village affairs does lie within the control of the founding local lineage through its control of offices, superior wealth, and prestige.

• 622 In the traditional system, disputes within a village are
692 brought to the attention of the headman by the contending parties. He may suggest some compromise if it is not a question

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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626 which are held to be traditional, sacred, and true is a necessary characteristic of a society where leaders voice consensus rather than promulgate edicts and where there is no specialized police force. Perhaps the Santal are as "tradition-directed" as a society may be. This means that weight is given to tradition in making decisions, but it does not mean, as abundant evidence soon to be presented will indicate, that Santal culture is static. It means rather that the "people," like our Supreme Court, must justify their decisions in terms of real or alleged traditional precepts and practices. As our own historical experience indicates, tradition so interpreted and utilized allows for considerable flexibility. Thus it would probably be more accurate to call Santal society (and possibly other societies known for reverence of the traditional) "tradition-justifying," rather than "tradition-directed."

613 The dominance of a particular local lineage in a village is
• 621 joined with village solidarity, just as the officials of the village
776 are recruited from this lineage. Every village has its "headman's
778 shrine" (*maṅjhithan*); here as at the "Sacred Grove" the deities are represented by unworked stones. The central deity of this shrine is "Oldman Headman" (*Maṅjhi-Haṛam*), who is the spirit of the founding father of the village, i.e., the first headman. At various ceremonies the headman or priest, accompanied by the villagers, makes offerings to Oldman Headman, who is, of course, of their lineage. By contributions to the offerings to Oldman Headman and by various formal and informal gestures, the villagers both acknowledge the authority of their village officials and participate in commemoration of village solidarity.

621 In some contexts village membership and solidarity are paramount. Fellow villagers must worship together on prescribed

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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621 occasions, bury or cremate one another, assist each other during illness or scarcity, entertain one another, and make "pleasure" possible. They may hunt together, jointly stock some pool with fish and generally carry on the daily routine of work and leisure side by side. Santal kinship groups are important within the village, but they are not nearly so divisive as Hindu castes. Neither the clan, the sub-clan, nor the local lineage is endogamous nor so structured as to limit social relations with non-members. Indeed, all are exogamous and it is only the entire tribe which in some respects is equivalent to a Hindu caste. The Santal village is therefore more internally solidary than a Hindu village of the region, though many clans may be represented.

Though not formally so, the village is in practice almost completely exogamous. This is partially due to the close relations between villagers and to the feeling that if a man's in-laws, and particularly his brothers-in-law, are living in his village, he will have difficulty in "disciplining" his wife; to put it as the Santals do, "She will run home to her house all the time making trouble between her husband and her brothers."

582 593

The tie to one's village is also supported by the attachment to the agricultural land which generally surrounds the few rows of houses and which is regarded as an integral part of the village. Besides the founding spirit of the village there are distinctive "boundary deities" (*sima boŋga*) marking the special attachment to one's own village.

622 628 692 As indicated earlier, the village is tied to about a dozen nearby villages in a quasi-judicial relationship. The head of this confederation is in many respects a multi-village headman. He is generally recruited from that local lineage which first migrated to the area; his tenure and appointment are subject to

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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622 the approval of the villagers with whom he is associated; he
628 presides generally at disputes which cannot be settled within
692 a particular village, at inter-village disputes or at discussions of custom which are of concern to the entire set of villages under his jurisdiction; like the headman of a village, he is at most *primus inter pares*. Publicly he is little more than the voice of consensus, though privately his influence is that of an especially respected and powerful person.

69 The "justice" of the Santal, i.e., their institutionalized prac-
[577] tices as distinct from the desires of injured parties, places a strong premium on rendering decisions which will restore sev-
[681] ered relationships and permit life to return to what it was before the dispute. The fee to the "court" is often as substantial as a judgment and must be paid by both parties. There is almost always encouragement to settle "out of court" by friends and officials. Fees paid to the "court" are generally spent to buy rice beer and viands so that after the bitterness of the contest both court and contestants join together in "pleasure," and all
[192] is as it was. These gatherings to settle disputes within the village are usually called "discussions" (*galmarao*); multi-village gatherings are known as *dorbar* (Hindi, *dorbar* = court).

584 Besides the judicial tie, each village is bound to a number of
• 621 others by marriage. Marriage procedures will be discussed at length but it is appropriate here to note that marriage is arranged with the aid of villagers and village officials as well as those associated by kinship and is of great interest and concern to the whole village. The ceremonies of marriage dramatize this concern, reflecting village solidarity in gaining and accepting a daughter or sorrowfully giving one up, as the case may be.

63 Beyond the multi-village judicial organization there are no
184 formally organized territorial units: however, regional cultural

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priest's brothers remarked that "the working people come only when it is time to eat." The priest also complained of this, as he had done at several other ceremonies. However, there were many more present than is usual, for my camera and the prospect of having a photograph taken which might later be obtained from me was a potent lure to these people. My assistant reported almost no workers present at these same rites after I had left India. The remainder of the ceremonies are performed as in the village, except that there is no procession of dancing men and women to lead the priest back into the village.

The attenuation of the ceremony and the relative non-participation of migrant industrial workers is not significantly the result of secularization. In spite of many interviews and casual discussions about the supernatural I found little evidence of decreased belief in the deities or the efficacy of rites. Also, many of these men occasionally returned to their villages for various festivals, and when I saw such men in their native villages I found their participation as ardent and regular as that of any villager.

In my view the most important cause of this attenuation of, and non-participation in, ceremonies is limited identification with the *bustee*, and there is evidence that this is the result of migration to industrial employment. The second most important cause of attenuation and non-participation is the time demands of industrial employment.

Those who participate most regularly and fully have strong grounds for identifying with the *bustee*. Almost all are natives of Daredih. The two other regular and full participants include the only immigrant worker who has bought land in Daredih and a very early immigrant who has become assistant headman.

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177 178 184 796 621 The former, who had no land in his native village, frequently told me that for him Daredih was his village; the latter, by virtue of his position, of which he is extremely proud, is required to attend rites, and no doubt his status makes the *bustee* and its deities more his own than would otherwise be the case. The others, who have neither agricultural land nor position in Daredih, feel that it is not their village, that the local gods are not quite their gods, that the priest is not quite their priest, and that the founder of the village is not the founder of their village. This lack of commitment is reflected in both the attenuation of and non-participation in the various ceremonies of *Baha*. The Santal themselves say, "Here all are workers so we don't worship so much," or simply, "Here we don't worship so much."

[769] This interpretation rather than secularization is supported by the observation that ancestor worship is generally practiced even by those who do not attend the community rites performed by the priest; in ancestor worship it is, of course, one's own ancestors who receive the offering. The failure to dance before the priest's house and the failure to provide him with a dancing procession to and from the Sacred Grove are indications that he is not quite their priest; the same explanation accounts for their frequent failure to contribute to the sacrifices on behalf of the *bustee*. Indeed, the Santal themselves regard all of these acts as signs of respect to the village leaders, and as already indicated, the priest often complains on this score.

Nor can all these acts, which both express and serve to weaken the solidarity of Daredih, be entirely due to the time [793] demands of industrial employment. The priest is himself an industrial worker, as are many of his patrilineal relatives who live in Daredih, and they are regular participants. Also, the

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177 number of immigrant workers present when it comes time to
178 eat the offerings that have been made, drink the rice beer which
184 has been offered, and join in secular dancing for pleasure is
796 invariably greater than those present during the performance
621 of village ceremonials.

It is not that the immigrant workers regard it as wrong to worship the deities of the *bustee*'s Sacred Grove or to offer respect to its priest and founder; on occasion and in varying degrees they will do both. Except for "Old Man Headman" and the boundary deities, the same beings are celebrated in their native villages. It is rather a question of having less attachment than of opposition. As these workers say when asked about non-participation, "It is all right because all is being done properly in my native village."

182 Typically, migration to industrial employment does not re-
423 sult in acquisition of agricultural land at the new place of
464 residence; both limited availability of land in such areas as
621 well as alternative employment make this difficult. Lack of agricultural land belonging to the *bustee* limits identification. Ownership of such land has the opposite effect; as the regular attendance at Daredih's communal ceremonies by immigrant workers who had purchased land there tends to show. Similarly, the Santal have a long history of migration, and Santal who move to a new village where they acquire land show none of the signs of lack of identification characteristic of immigrant workers in Daredih. Thus it is not simply migration which is responsible for diminished solidarity, but migration to industrial employment.

177 The *Baha* festival was, of course, not the only ceremonial
178 casualty of migration to industrial employment of which I saw
184 evidence at Daredih. At the great *Sohrae* festival, held in Oc-
796

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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demands of factory employment are in certain critical ways different than those of agricultural labor. For example, TISCO works on three eight-hour shifts, while the hours of agricultural labor are typically identical for all. Furthermore, in a number of departments of a steel mill there are no occasions, barring a strike, when all work comes to a standstill. This industrial situation makes it impossible for all Santal workers of the community to be present for a ceremony during any fixed period. Some departments give a leave of absence to all their workers for major Hindu festivals, but Santal ceremonials do not always coincide in time with Hindu ones. Nor could such an adjustment, if desired, be easily made, since Santal villages have no fixed days for their ceremonies and each village chooses a day or several days within the appointed month during which the villagers will be free of agricultural labor.

There is a third factor to be taken account of, though it is so entwined with lack of identification that it may only be distinguished analytically. Since the immigrant workers seldom have agricultural land in the *bustee*, some of the rites performed at various ceremonies which concern agricultural abundance, such as *Baha*, are of diminished interest. To be sure, they probably have land in their native village contributing to their own and their relatives' income, but, as they remark, "It is all right not to participate here because it is all being done properly in my native village." This attitude is closely related to lack of identification since, as already indicated, the place where one has land is likely to be regarded as one's own village. Connected with this attitude is the immigrant worker's intention of eventually retiring to his native village to live off the land. He may even look forward to purchasing his land with his industrial earnings.

782 793 The Kuḍam Naeke (the priest of the outskirts) offers his own blood every time the Naeke performs sacrifices, in the name of the Pargana bonga and the bongas along the boundaries. At Janthar (the first fruit offering of the heavy rice) he every year sacrifices a pig to the Pargana bonga, and at that time he also offers his own blood to him and to the bongas along the boundaries. At the hunt he offers to the same, in order that the village people may be fortunate and return well. At this time he makes an invocation: Greetings then, O Pargana, blood offering, pricked out blood is given, is offered to thee for the sake of the hunt, where on the right side or the left side a servant girl or a dog puppy, a loṭo thorn (a thorny bush), a karke thorn (a pricking bush)[1] may be, in holes and recesses, mayest thou press it down, cover it up. A worn-out winnowing-fan, a ball of cotton thou wilt arrange for us, make security for us, Father my Thakur, Lord.

e. The division of agricultural land.

• 621 423 When they have appointed the rulers of a new village, then they sit one day and divide the land and homestead fields. They make units. One unit of agricultural land is what is needed for one plough. Having settled this they fix the rent, and at the same time set aside the land allotted to the offices of Maṅjhi, Paranik, Jog Maṅjhi, Jog Paranik, Godet, Naeke, and Kuḍam Naeke. The Maṅjhi gets four portions, the Paranik gets three portions, the Jog Maṅjhi gets two portions, and the others one portion each as office-land. This they have the use of without paying rent. The Maṅjhi had formerly half a rak (unit) following his office. Nowadays some village headmen have very large incomes.

245 In a new village people plant Horse-radish trees and Pipal trees near their respective houses. They eat the Horse-radish tree vegetables and the Pipal tree they have to get shade, and the Pipal tree, it is said, will be of use also in the next world.

621 When other people see that they get very good crops in a new village, they also will come and settle down there. The old residents will give them a share, a little of their prepared ricefields and of their highland fields, and the headman will show them fallow land to prepare ricefields. Then the village becomes populous. They work, do their business, they eat and drink, they have dances and games, they enjoy themselves, they live there.

f. Wealthy and poor people.

556 In the same village it does not go equally well for all there. Some people have both plough-cattle and servants; they are both industrious and also have sense, and they are also very niggardly; such people become wealthy. But some people have, to start with, no plough-cattle; they are also alone; they also suffer a good deal from fever; they have no sense; they are foolish, they are also lazy, they have no children either, and their women-folk waste away all, or they themselves squander all by beer-drinking, or

[1] The loṭo, Randia dumetorum, Lam., and the karke, Striadella retusa, Sprengel.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

572 also become intimate friends, and also elderly women; but the time for becoming intimate friends is really when men and women are young.

Cattle-herd boys become great comrades, and mostly at this time intimate friendship between them is established. Those among the comrades whose hearts are especially bound together, become intimate friends; they stay together, they blow the flute, they kill birds, hares, and prafowls; they sing, they drive the cattle about by turns, and they help each other when there is any danger. They eat rice from the same leaf-plate, and when they kill birds or anything they divide and eat them. When they kill a hare, they give the killer the hind half. Persons who have become intimate friends in their boyhood, do not forget each other even when they have grown old, they remain friends all life long. When they, after having lost sight of each other, meet again long afterwards, they become very glad; they kiss each other.

Girls also become intimate friends in the same way, and it lasts all life long with them. Instead of the fellowship of the boys girls become what is called karam-branch friends. If the hearts of two girls have been bound fast together, they will at a karam festival[9] take two leaves of a branch and put these upon each other's head and thereupon salute all the people there. Afterwards they give the village people beer and food. These two do not address each other using their names, but address each other saying 'karam branch'. Young men and girls do not become intimate friends, except in connexion with marriage.

[178] Nowadays the intimacy of former days is being lost; the mind of the people is going to the bad. People mostly look out for their own happiness, let other people have whatever may happen.

m. Sticking together of the village people.

621 628 The Santals consider it an honour when their village is honoured, and they feel it a dishonour when their village is dishonoured; therefore if some one in their village gets into a quarrel with people of another village, then the whole village stands up for him. And if they hear any disgraceful statement concerning their own village, they apply to the headman of their village; thereupon they all, the village headman included, seize such people and say to them: Prove to us what you have spoken about us; otherwise we are not letting you off. If they are unable to substantiate it, they fine them very heavily. If any village has become famed, then the people of this village, when meeting with the people of the country in connexion with any matter, feel themselves high like hills; they take pride in the reputation of their village, even when they themselves are fools.

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[137] [9] The karam is a large forest tree, Adina cordifolia H. f. & B. The karam festivals will be described later on.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

[P. 151]

CHAPTER VI

TRIBAL POLITY

The expression 'polity' amongst Santals may sound paradoxical enough, but we can perhaps observe without fear of contradiction that as one studies the elements of Santal tribal government, one must wonder if one is not face to face with the essence of democracy and about to discover here a government of the people, for the people, by the people. This feature of the Santal impressed a recent Deputy Commissioner[1] of the Santal Parganas so much that he re-shuffled the Santal assemblies to suit modern conditions for a better and a more natural administration of justice and government. This reversion to the good old days was not, what might be called a success; the reasons were various: but all of them when analysed will lead to one conclusion only, the want of education and again the want of education, and not perhaps to any inherent defect of the constitution of the tribal assemblies.

We propose to examine in this chapter the mechanism of the Santal system of tribal govern-

1. Mr. Hoernle, I. C. S., Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas (1927-32).

Jt Mukherjee O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

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ment and the customary laws that regulate the society to illustrate our observations.

The Limbs of Law

622 (1) In villages

(i) Headman:—

The social authority in the Santal villages is exercised ordinarily by the headman, called Mañjhi, with a batch of village officials to assist him. In [651] Mayurbhanj, he is generally called the Pròdhan, an office belonging to the rural revenue-collector, who need not always be the headman (Mañjhi) Accor- [427] ding to custom he is also the *Ijardar* under a land-holder. His function is to collect rents and to [423] allot land amongst the tenants. His office is not [585] altogether honorary, for he holds free of rent parcels of *màn*[1] land and receives a fee of Re. 1 at each Santal marriage, presenting in turn a pot of rice-beer.

624 [423] (ii) *Paranik*:—He is the assistant headman also enjoying the privilege of rent-free land and having under him a third official, *Jòg-Paranik*.

(iii) *Jòg-Mañjhi*:—This interesting office belongs to a Santal for arranging tribal feasts and carousals of rice-beer, when he acts as a censor of village morals, and is called upon to exercise his

1. Land held by village officials rent-free.

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

Santal Administrative Officer.

Manjhi (Headman): The basis of the Santal communal system is the village. Santals will never settle alone in an uncultivated area ; they go there in a body and settle with a leader and his assistants. The leader is known as *Manjhi* (headman), being chosen by the village people to administer the rights, rules and ceremonies of the Santal village community. No public sacrifice, no festival, no ceremony such as marriage can properly be done without the *Manjhi* taking the lead or initiative. The *Manjhi* is the representative of the village both in external and internal affairs. He also collects rents from the villagers. If the headman of a Santal village be other than a Santal (such as Kumar or Bauri) which sometimes happens, the Santals will have for themselves an official called *Handi Manjhi* who performs all the duties of the Santal village except collecting rent and other work demanded by the Government.

Assistant to the Headman-Paramanik Jogmanjhi: There are two assistants to the *Manjhi*, one is *Paramanik* and the other is the *Jogmanjhi*. The *Paramanik* is the principal assistant and representative of the *Manjhi* by whom he is chosen. If the *Manjhi* dies without any male issue or brothers then the *Paramanik* will get the office. In his (*Manjhi's*) social functions the *Manjhi* is assisted by the *Jogmanjhi*. His duty to prevent sexual intercourse in the same sept and also with a *diku* (non-Santal). If a girl becomes pregnant the *Jogmanjhi* has to find out who the culprit is. If he does not, the villagers tie him with the rope used for tying a buffalo to a pole in the cowshed of the *Manjhi* and scold him and fine him.

4; Bi[illegible]as D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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SANTAL PARGANAS

The Santals have many things of value in their culture. There are many elements that are well worth preservation and which have a great deal to teach the so called civilized neighbours. 177

The Santals have a large number of folklores and folk songs which contain many new ideas and thoughts. Their art of recreation brings a balance in their life which is lamentably absent in the civilized neighbours. 588

The political organisation of the Santals is worth studying. Although they have neither studied any literature on this line nor they have any written constitution yet they are extremely disciplined people and are managing their tribal affairs in a highly democratic way. The communal life of the Santal is well organised, in which everything is shared even joy and sorrow of one is the joy and sorrow of the whole community. This virtue is lacking in the so called civilized society where life is individualistic and so we find more selfishness in civilized people. 66 62 184

The knowledge of herbs and medicines of the Santal medicine-men is highly developed. Rev. P.O. Bodding with the help of two qualified doctors, Mrs. Bodding M.B. & Ch.B. (Edin) and Dr. B.B. Bogh, collected a large number of plants and other stuff used by the Santal medicine-men. He published the names of the plants and other stuff, the list of prescriptions and veterinary medicines in the memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in two parts.[1] Rev. Bodding men- 278 756 757 278 757 278

1. P.O. Bodding—Studies in Santal Medicine and connected folklore—Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Calcutta) Vol. X No. I p. 1-132 and No. II p. 133-426 (1927).

5: Culshaw

AW42 Santal AW42

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/Information on the "Santal Christian Community" has been filed in category 794./

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

up for non-payment of the accumulated debt, which by then was a considerably larger sum. They were thus compelled to make new agreements with their landlord at an enhanced rent and with inferior rights. The later passage of legislation has done little to lift the burden of despair about the future which is an unhappy characteristic of Santal life today. Such incidents explain in no small measure the cry of the heart which is heard from time to time: "Give us back our land." It is some consolation that the Act of 1918, followed by legislation during the last twenty years aimed at improving the status of the peasantry in Bengal, has brought to a close some of the worst chapters in a long and sordid story.

The community life of the Santal centres in his village, and is so organized as to make common action inevitable in social, economic and religious affairs. The houses are built on either side of the village street, which must be left wide enough for two bullock carts to pass each other. This street extends from east to west, the eastern end being known as the upper end. The houses, set close together, have their main door opening on to the village street, and each household is responsible for the state of the road outside its own residence. It is here in the village that the Santal learns how to live; here he is initiated into the traditional loyalties of the tribe, and the village of his birth exercises a deep influence over him all his days.

The village headman, or *manjhi*, is the man of greatest consequence in the community. The post is hereditary, and it passes ordinarily to the eldest son of the former headman. When the direct line of succession fails through lack of sons or from incapacity on the part of the natural heir, the office passes on to a brother or near relative on the paternal side. The history of the village is preserved in the tradition handed down concerning the headman's ancestry. For example, at Sarenga they tell a story of the three brothers who were the founders of the village and divided the village offices between them. Among them Lokhon has acquired the greatest measure of renown, and he is commemorated by a shrine outside the present village. The story is told that he died suddenly, and before the news of his death had spread through the village his spirit took possession of a young man sitting in the courtyard of a house some distance away, and through him Lokhon told the villagers that they were to make a special shrine for him. There is a ceremony at the beginning of each new year which suggests that at one time the appointment of the head-

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They have no memory of ever having possessed the institution, but a snatch of song once heard suggests that they did at some period abandon it. In a *Sohrae* song occur the words

> The young girls are sleeping in the girls' house,
> The young men are sleeping in the young men's cowshed.[1]

If, as seems likely, they once had such an institution, it is probable that the *jogmaṇjhi* and his wife were in charge. At some festivals the young men sleep at the house of the *jog maṇjhi*, and at the time of the *Sohrae* they go to him at the beginning of the festival and ask him in formal language to turn a blind eye to any of the faults they commit during that time. He is also called in to investigate allegations of immoral behaviour. The appointment is for life and it is hereditary, like that of the headman. In every village there are also two priests, who are responsible for maintaining right relations with the unseen world, but it will be more convenient to deal with their functions at a later stage.[2]

The humblest of the village officials is the *godet'*, the bailiff and messenger of the headman. When a child is born or a villager dies, it is the *godet'* who carries the news to all the houses. If it becomes necessary to summon the men of the village to a council to announce the near approach of a marriage party, or to collect dues from the houses for a feast in connection with a festival, it is the *godet's* duty to see that it is done. He is the errand boy, and consequently something of a butt for the wit of the village, as the following song (sung during the *Sohrae* festival) bears witness:

> Here comes the headman walking slowly,
> And here comes his deputy with wooden sandals,
> And also the *godet'* calling out to everyone.
>
> Put out a woven bed for the headman to sit on,
> Put out a wooden stool for his deputy,
> And put out for the *godet'* a broken bed.
>
> Pour out for the headman the first brew of beer,
> Pour out for his deputy the second brew,
> Pour out for the *godet'* the leavings.
>
> Give to the headman cakes of sifted flour,
> Give to his deputy some coarser cakes,
> And give to the *godet'* the lumpy bits.[3]

[1] See Appendix B, No. 1.
[2] See Chapter 7
[3] See Appendix B, No. 2.

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CHAPTER 7

THE WORLD INVISIBLE—(1)

THE Santal village is organized to secure the greatest possible degree of co-operation not only in temporal affairs but also in dealing with the spirit world. The relationship between Santal society and some part of the universe inhabited by spirits is very close, and it is maintained by the society acting through its representatives. One of the most important officials in the village is the *nacke*, or village priest, whose business it is to maintain right relationships with the tribal spirits. A priest who was once asked whether he really believed in his work replied without any hesitation: "If I did not do my work the whole village would become sick!" His answer provides in effect a true summary of the Santal conception of the priest's work. He is a man apart, and he is conscious of his separation from his fellows. Alone of all the village officials he is not appointed by his fellow villagers, but by the *bongas*, the spirits that are worshipped. The investing of a new priest with the necessary authority occurs during the ceremonies following the death of his predecessor. The spirits take possession of the designated individual and so establish the identity of the new priest beyond any possibility of doubt. The marks of possession, the result of the process known to the Santals as *rum*, are quite familiar. *Rum* is the regular method by which the spirits reveal their wishes, convey comfort or warning, and assure the living of their fellowship with the spirits of the tribe and with their ancestors. The behaviour of a person who is possessed is similar to that of one who has suffered a sudden onslaught of insanity, and he speaks in the character of the spirit who has for the time being taken possession of his personality.

In spite of the supernatural origin of the priestly office, one finds that the spirits in making an appointment have been actuated largely by common-sense considerations. They usually ensure that the eldest son of the deceased priest assumes his father's functions, or, failing him, perhaps they will appoint a brother. One may discern two reasons why the succession is secured in this manner. In the first place, a son will have had special opportunities of watching his father at work, and having been brought up in the right atmosphere he is already familiar with the rules and customs that govern the office. Secondly, when the original distribution of lands was made in the new village, the first *nacke*, in common with the other officials, received

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797 The attitude of the community towards the family or the
798 individual who has become Christian is a complex of tolerance
•621 and incomprehension. Becoming a Christian is not in itself an
626 offence for which there is an established penalty in tribal custom: the village council does not act and there is no formal outcasting of the offender from the community as there is, for example, when a Santal has married outside the tribe. The denial of tobacco and drinking water, two of the common manifestations of "separateness", are rarely used in the area, though sometimes found elsewhere. Thus, in the early days of the mission at Benagaria, Skrefsrud found that Christian converts were being cut off from social intercourse; by a process that sounds very like intimidation he invited all the leading Santals of the neighbourhood to a feast with the converts and informed them that having eaten with the converts they must now receive them back into the tribe.[1] Where social ostracism does occur it does not last long. There is rarely any need for a family to change their residence on becoming Christian so far as their fellow villagers are concerned, though some Christians do so because there are occasions when an isolated Christian family is put to grave inconvenience. This is particularly the case when a death occurs, for
[764] the non-Christians will have nothing whatever to do with the disposal of a corpse after the strange manner of the Christians. Such predicaments occur only when the degree of isolation is great. With the individual convert it happens sometimes that he has to eat his meals separately from the rest of the family
[152] for a time. It is served to him out in the courtyard rather than on the verandah or in the house, but this signifies contempt rather than any other emotion and it does not last. Sometimes the members of the family show signs of genuine grief. There is no
[582] reason, from a Santal point of view, why non-Christian Santals should not marry Christians, although such marriages are not popular. The chief discouragement to them and the only discipline against them is exercised from the Christian side. And while relations between a convert and his kinsfolk and distant relatives do become strained, the old friendly relations are often resumed and it is customary for Christians to pay visits to the homes of non-Christian relations and *vice versa*. No attempt is made to dispossess or disinherit Christians who continue to enjoy the fruits of their toil in the fields.

797 This tolerance of Christians in the midst alongside the dis-
798
[127]

[1] My authority for this statement is a small life of Skrefsrud in Santali, published by the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches.